DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 403 046 PS 024 961

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TITLE The Century of the Child, Part II: Back to the Future or Forward to the Past?
PUB DATE 96
NOTE 16p.; In: "Childhood Education: International Perspectives," see PS 024 960.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adults; Child Behavior; Childhood Attitudes; Childhood Interests; *Childhood Needs; *Children; Day Care; Early Childhood Education; Foreign Countries; Mass Media Effects; *Parent Attitudes; *Social Change; Social History
IDENTIFIERS Childhood Experiences; Key (Ellen); Sweden

ABSTRACT

In 1900, the Swedish writer and social commentator Ellen Key published a book called "The Century of the Child," presenting changes she believed were necessary in the care of children in the twentieth century. This article examines the reality of childhood and child care in Sweden, comparing Key's wishes to both actual changes and current attitudes. It concludes that the conditions of children's lives have changed so profoundly that it is questionable whether the ideals of "the century of the child" have any relevance when discussing childhood today. For example, although corporal punishment and mandatory Christian education have been abandoned, the number of mothers working outside the home--and consequently, the number of day care facilities--has grown enormously, contrary to Key's hopes, and there is no indication that people would reverse the trend. The article claims that childhood today is more public and more participatory; that children are less dependent on parents and more dependent on other adults; and that they are less irresponsible and mentally segregated from the adult world (due largely to the mass media). The article also discusses the conflict of values when childhood is regarded as a transition to "future adulthood," as opposed to a culture unto itself, and advocates that adults allow children a free space to use childhood cultural products and experiences as they will. Finally, the article urges a reconsideration of the definition of childhood and adulthood as opposite states (a model of relations in which one party is weak and the other strong), adopting instead a view of human relations as siblinghood. Contains nine references. (EV)

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THE CENTURY OF THE CHILD, PART II: BACK TO THE FUTURE OR FORWARD TO THE PAST?[1]

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In 1900, the Swedish writer and social debater Ellen Key published a book called *The century of the Child*. Ever since, the expression "the century of the child" has been a slogan all over Europe, not only in the field of child research. The title is borrowed from a drama from 1896 in which there is a line stating that "the next century will be the century of the child - like this one has been the century of the woman". Key here presents a list of all the changes she thinks are necessary in order to implement what's best for the children in the 20th century.

Let's look at those of Key's wishes that have come true so far, and let us also see if the remaining wishes still are what we want today, or if we - with the benefit of hindsight - now have a different view on these matters. So, let us compare childhood at the turn of the century with childhood of today. How far have we actually come?

First, among those things that we HAVE accomplished in Sweden, which naturally will be my test case, we can distinguish the following ones. Corporal punishment or caning in schools was finally forbidden by law in 1958. Parents also lost their "right" to give their children a beating in 1979. The Christian religion is no longer taught exclusively in schools, like it still was when I went to school. Today children learn about all religions equally. The freedom to choose school subjects more freely is just about to be introduced at all levels. Children are now playing more than ever before and the value of play is widely recognized.

However, there still remain issues to be realized if we are to believe in Ellen Key's visions of what is best for the children. Quite contrary to Key's hopes,

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PS 024961

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day-care facilities or kindergartens have grown enormously in number, and all children over the age of 1 have a right by law to receive communal day-care. In 1950 only a very small percentage of children was enrolled in day-care, actually about the same as 1900.

Almost 90 percent of all mothers with small children are working outside the home. This is more than three times the amount of 1950. Thus neither women nor children have been brought back into the home, which Key hoped most of all. Consequently, home education has not replaced either the pre-schools or the lower stages of the comprehensive school. Today, very few people in Sweden even wish for these changes actually to take place.

In the childhood of today there are new dark clouds over the heads of children that were not current issues in the days of Ellen Key or even in 1950:

Parents and teachers in the 1950's, and grown-ups in general, were a kind of volunteer policemen. Children were taught to obey and be polite. Parents of today are a kind of amateur psychologists who want to give children "freedom under responsibility". We have today a totally different view on obedience.

200 000 are children of immigrants, who actually are poorly integrated in the Swedish society, or total outsiders. Today two thirds of all young people live in suburbs which did not even exist in 1950. This means that we have a totally new kind of, often very large scale and anonymous, living surrounding, where the young are at the same time invisible and much more visible, but treated as a group instead of as individuals.

200 000 children and teenagers in Sweden are children of drug users. That means that they, maybe already at the age of three, have cut off their feelings and find it extremely difficult to trust anybody. Surely there were alcoholics in 1900 and in 1950 but very few drug addicts.

Parents have become "time robbers". Since 1950, 40 hours weekly of shared time - or at least the presence of their parents - have been stolen from children. The German writer Michael Ende has written a wonderful book about time robbers (Momo). An American has named TV the giant time robber but the real time robbers in the lives of today's children are undeniably their parents. Due to longer compulsory school attendance, teachers also pinch a couple of years more from their pupils' lives. And although parents steal time from their children, they still have too little time: 15 years ago adults in Sweden had 25 hours of free time each week, today they say they have 10 hours... As a compensation for their parents' time, children now receive time from institutional adults at day-care centres, schools, recreational and play centres, sports and television. But TV and videos taken together fill no more than two hours a day of Swedish children's lost time, contrary to what you might think.

Actually, the role of modern mass media in those changes that have taken place in the lives of children since the turn of the century (or even since the 1950's when I was a child) is quite modest.

Today's children indeed lead a different kind of life than children did only 30 or 40 or 50 years ago. Above all, they live a more "public" childhood: more

institutions, more media, more commercial supply - quite simply a less isolated "family childhood". Today's children have greater freedom to choose their cultural products, and they spend more time than ever before under the influence of institutions outside the family. As I see it, professionals in the public child care system and in schools work in the same sphere as the mass media do, and with the same goal: to counter the child's segregation and isolation in the family, to support the children in their emancipation, in their identity work and their capacity to understand themselves and others. Actually, I think that the closed family unit is the most dangerous social institution there has ever been: how much physical and psychic abuse has not taken place in the family under the disguise of upbringing? The home is, however, still the most dangerous place to be in both for women and for children. We should indeed idealise neither the family nor the past...

The conditions of children's lives have changed so profoundly that it can be called into question whether the ideals of "The century of the Child" have any relevance at all when discussing the childhood of today.

From dependence to participation

Was life then better for children in the "good old days"? Absolutely not! We can find evidence of this in the changing ideas as to what constitutes a child and what childhood actually means. Do we mean the same thing today by childhood as people did a hundred years ago? Traditionally childhood has meant four things: dependence (economic as well as emotional), protection, irresponsibility and segregation. Today, children are just as dependent on adults as they were 100 years ago but less dependent on their parents and more dependent on other adults around them - which I consider a positive development. Today's children are more protected and supervised than children have ever been but less irresponsible and less mentally segregated - even though they are physically kept more apart from e.g. adult workplaces. A hundred, or even fifty years ago, children were of course less physically separated from the adult world but in terms of knowledge and psychology they were outsiders and treated as more unequal. Above all the mass media have, in a mostly positive manner, influenced the way children have entered into the adult mental world - regardless of what Mr. Postman would like to say about media making childhood disappear (Postman 1985).

The fact that children are regarded as less irresponsible and more equal is partly a result of the independent adults' wish to see them that way: it eases the parents' bad conscience when their children are left in day-care or alone. But children also know a lot more today and are capable of coping with much more than ever before. Karin M Ekström has in a recent study (1995) shown how Swedish children and teenagers are allowed to participate in deciding family buying: the children are called upon to decide purchase of

half of all the capital goods and two thirds of all daily products. This is partially a form of work sharing when hard working and tired parents gladly let their children decide what the family is going to have for dinner or what kind of detergent to buy.

Nowadays children are also very well-informed and aware of environmental issues. They are not just influenced by TV commercials but also critical and sceptical towards all attempts to persuade or con us. School children are also the family experts on the latest technology like computers, TV, videos, stereos, microwave ovens, etc., and therefore know what buys are the best. Parents also regard this purchasing as a question of family democracy, as education and something that strengthens their children's self reliance and feelings of responsibility and participation.

Childhood is being here and now!

Definitions of "child" and "childhood" are historically specific, just like definitions of "adults" and "adulthood". However, we get the paradox that when adults look at children from **their own adult** point of view, children are seen as relatively similar to the adults themselves (especially if this is in accordance with the adult's own interests, e.g. work). However, when we adults look at children and children's culture from **the children's** point of view, we see them basically as very different and distant from ourselves. This has to do with what we, at the moment, value most: when we regard children as FUTURE ADULTS, we believe that work, independence, self reliance, participation in social life and responsibility are BETTER qualities than unproductive time, dependence, poor self esteem, isolation or lack of responsibility. The working adult sees life in a day-care centre as the equivalent of participation in societal work, as practicing responsibility and independence - a kind of children's model of productive work.

When adults evaluate leisure and cultural activities, however, these issues are turned upside-down: those qualities that have no outlets in the workday, like playfulness, creativity and irresponsibility, are now supposed to be compensated for - or nostalgically dreamed about. The truth is, however, that the adult spare time after a hard day's work actually is not very active. Through the magic formula of the "child within", adults succeed though at stealing for themselves the best things from both worlds: you think you are both the independent, active, contributing adult and deep inside the imaginative and creative "child"... The fact that you yourself as a child **also** were dependent, powerless, protected, segregated and irresponsible, is now easily forgotten. And you think that the children beside you on the sofa watching TV are terribly passive and unimaginative, and they have not even worked all day as you have been doing...

Imagination, freedom, playfulness, creativity - allegedly qualities belonging uniquely to childhood and culture - are undeniably valued HIGHER than adult routines, formalities, overseriousness and lack of imagination. For some reason, "children's culture" always represents THE CHILD AS A NOW EXISTING CHILD, as being instead of becoming, while education and pedagogy see children as future adults. It all has to do with what we regard as the object of comparison. In the previous case, when we look at things from our own adult perspective, we compare **ourselves now** with our **children as future adults**.

From the perspective of the child and that of children's culture (or childhood in an extremely abstract sense), however, we make comparisons between the time **when we were children** and that of the **children of today** - no longer between today's adults and today's children. In addition, we are not even seeing things clearly. If we were, we would acknowledge, for example, that adult free time after a tiring workday is actually rather passive. We would also understand that if the child has already "worked" in the day-care centre among 40-50 other children for 7-9 hours, she/he must really be much more tired than the child of the 1950's who only had one or two brothers or sisters to play with. We would also realize that the child still is powerless and dependent on us. In other words we would become aware of the child's rather **different** position as compared to us adults both now and during the time when we were children.

I am not saying that today's children are worse off than children 50 or 100 years ago, only that they grow up in a more complicated and demanding world, and seem to manage surprisingly well in it. Above all children today have to create an identity for themselves more on their own, make a synthesis of many more roles, reality factors, and role models: this is one of the things that they use TV for. They are quite simply working extremely hard even when they seem to be most passive.

One sign of the changing notion of childhood is undeniably the enormous growth of cultural products directly tailored to suit children. Ellen Key made a list of recommended reading, of which almost nothing was tempting to a child under 12. Today, there is an abundance of offerings, especially adapted for each age group, containing notably less violence than the adult culture in which children could participate at the turn of the century when products especially adapted for children were almost non-existent.

Behind the demands for quality in children's culture produced by adults is, however always the idea of **development**. According to adult educators, cultural products for children should be directed towards the future. They should function as preparation for life. It is not a question anymore of "preserving childhood" but of enabling the child to "develop" and with the help of education reach the status of adult as quickly as possible. Mary Ellen Goodman (1970), a cultural anthropologist, defines quite clearly culture as "skills, abilities, habits and attitudes that are necessary if the child later on as an adult will be able to manage to live in the world...". But how on earth is the child going to manage until then? How can a child endure being small,

powerless, irresponsible and supposedly ignorant NOW? The criticised, so-called trivial, rehabilitating products of children's culture are invaluable here, as I see it. According to the children themselves, children's culture is life - not some preparation for it!

While children's culture produced by adults, like all other upbringing, has as its goal to make the children reach the highest stage (adulthood) as soon as possible, there is, however, one area left out of this acceleration process: the so-called children's own culture is supposed to keep children in childhood as long as possible. Children should be playful, innocent, draw imaginatively, play with cones etc., preferably till they get a job. WHY they should do that, remains unclear, though: probably because then as adults they will have something to have nostalgic memories of. Or perhaps it is understood to be a necessary safety outlet.

Children are always expected to be very "imaginative" but as a matter of fact especially children below two and between the ages of 5-11 need things or other influences to get their fantasy or daydreaming going - for example TV-programmes or toys. These things do not kill - on the contary they stimulate - the children's fantasy. Children do not simply play out TV manuscripts. The media offer children new kinds of ideas to be integrated into old play and games. The media do not, however, create new forms of play - they just modernise them. The effects of the media are noticeable on play only if the new ideas can be adapted to traditional forms of play like House, Dressing up, Ghosts, chase and attack, etc. The media enrich traditional play and give old games new names. This kind of labelling does not really change traditional play activities but the game of Ghosts of course becomes more thrilling with film monsters; Roxette and Madonna replace the circus games or playing at Princess; He-Man, Skeletor, Ninja Turtles and The Lion King stand in for old heroes, like Cops and Robbers, Soldiers and Cowboys and Indians.

Facts and fiction about violence in children's culture

Children's culture, regardless of how we define it, was definitely not better - or less violent - 100 years ago. Evidence suggests that, for example, children's free play was much more violent in the 1840's than in the 1950's or even today (Sutton-Smith 1981). Ellen Key made propaganda for more freedom and more play in the lives of young children. Today children actually play more than ever but are also more supervised. Therefore, adults are aware of and notice children's brutalities which formerly belonged to a closed childhood world. Today's adults try to control children's play to a much greater extent than for instance in the beginning of 1950's when there was still hardly any interference at all. Nowadays we have teachers in school yards during breaks to keep an eye on the children's play. The solution for

children is an "interiorized type of play" in the form of watching TV as a way to escape adult control. This means that they are also playing in psychological space instead of only physical space like earlier generations. But children of all times have always loved powerful roles and role reversals between small and big, powerful and powerless, strong and weak, and that is what TV-programmes are still about.

But what about the violence on TV?! Most of the Turtle games (like the He-Man-games before them) that I have observed in day-care centres and recreational centres have not been physically violent. The actions are only symbolical, verbal and above all noisy, with "sound effects" and phrases taken directly from the TV series. If you look closely enough, you can see that the boys' media games most of the time do not include any physical contact whatsoever. If they do, it is unintentional: they only intend to simulate hits, kicks, shootings or sword battles. A few socially disturbed boys can also fight for real in these games, accompanied by a strong dislike and scolding from the rest of the boys. In every respect the conflict games inspired by the media are among the least physically aggressive, most collaborative and most enjoyable games for preschool boys. The violent content is in stark contrast to the friendly and co-operative interaction.

Let me also quote Barthelmes et al. (1991) and their conclusions from the largest research ever done of day-care centres and children's games in relation to the media. They conclude that the conflicts originate in the social constellation, not in the patterns of the media: "According to our observations the actual aggression has nothing to do with the media." (ibid., 267) "In some cases the symbolically expressed aggressions are rather evidence of the child's ability to playfully control real conflicts and frustrations: they harm themselves and play "Revenge", they become frustrated because of the personnel or other children and they play "Shooting" them, instead of really hitting them. This means that the children transfer the real conflict over to the level of play and thus make it possible for both sides to find a way out the situation." (ibid., 267) Consequently, it is possible to conclude that media violence, rather than INCREASE REAL violence, can LESSEN the aggressions in the day-care centres.

Evidence suggests that the fairy tales that children heard in the earlier centuries were much more violent, more racist and more sexist than the ones TV provides them with today. Never before has children's culture in general been so well adapted to the child and so rebellious - but free from violence - as it is today. It is a matter of idealisation, nostalgia and self deception when the heroes of the folk tales are defended with arguments such as their use of cunning instead of violence: a renewed acquaintance with the main figures in the Grimm brothers folk and fairy tales is recommended, as well as with those in Mother Goose tales, or the Norwegian collections by Asbjörsen and Moe. In those stories people get killed or injured much more frequently than in today's TV products directed at children, where the only ones that "die" are the robots.

A content analysis of 200 traditional stories in Perrault's Mother Goose tales (from 1697) shows that they contained much worse cruelties than today's TV-stories for children. Among other things, the following (abbreviated) list could be arranged: 12 cases of cruelties towards people or animals, 9 cases where children are abandoned or lost, 7 cases of parts of bodies being cut off, 5 cases of threats to kill, 2 cases of choking to death, 1 case of devouring a human being, 1 case of a person being cut in two, 1 case of throat cutting, 1 death caused by squeezing, 1 case where the victim is cooked to death. (Handley-Taylor 1957). And this in one single tale collection! The Grimm Brothers' tales are not much better, containing detailed descriptions of murder, injuries, child murder and cannibalism: which child is not familiar with Little Red Riding Hood, Hansel and Gretel, Bluebeard and Three little pigs? And is it really more humane to lure, through cunning, a giant troll to commit suicide like the Norwegian Espen Askeladden did in the famous eating contest?

The old traditional fairy tales were of course not directly meant for children's ears but children were, however, unprotected listeners. At least during the last hundred years we have had products especially adapted for children. Today TV and computers are the foremost toys (and educational material) for children. TV is criticised for being dominated by adults, in contrast to play. Never before, however, has play been so associated with adult pedagogical, therapeutic or economic interests as it is today. This goes for all areas of children's culture: theatre, books and toys. It is paradoxical that the supply of toys has never been larger, at the same time as grown-ups are complaining that children do not know how to play anymore. The adults of course are comparing with the "correct" forms of plays from their own childhood.

However, play changes constantly along with prevailing techniques: in those days there was no TV, no computers, skateboards, roller-blades, street tennis, nor mountain bikes. When the part played by fathers in the lives of their children has become bigger, the so called "garbage" or trivial culture (dominated by pictures like comics, films, TV and sports) has increased as well. Computers and computer games also represent a "male" step away from the written, female wor(l)d. These are only a few examples of how men invade the cultural spheres that have traditionally been occupied by mothers and women. The boys appreciate this enormously.

Girls are not allowed to have much fun, though. Traditionally women have had the responsibility for education and mothers function as responsible bosses when it comes to the upbringing of children, supported by competent girls as subordinates or foremen. In the eyes of the pre-schoolers women are persons with enormous power, who take girls as their obedient allies to help them in the upbringing of the more difficult boys. Women are therefore also surprisingly obedient. This goes hand in hand with the fact that girls already from pre-school age have learnt to suppress their natural rebellious spirit and child perspectives. Girls are treated as helping hands not only by

mothers but also by personnel in the day-care centres and by school teachers in order to make their work possible.

Girls are not equally "rewarded" in day-care centres or in school for their jokes or their mischief but are trained to suppress this legitimate form of rebelliousness - to crush the motivated resistance of the powerless. Instead women encourage the girls' serious, responsible "adult" behaviour. I find it only natural, however, that all suppressed groups need their own resistance culture. Now boys alone have this burden on their shoulders. No wonder that boys do not want to watch programmes on children's TV with girls in the main roles. The boy figures are without doubt more independent and more rebellious - not just more violent. For girls, the sex of the main figure is not important. But what happens, really, to their aggression and their rebelliousness?!

A user perspective on cultural products

Upbringing, education and recommendations concerning children's culture have always deep down been based on power relations in which the child is forced to surrender to the values of the adult. Normally, evaluations of children's culture are made by those who do not themselves use the products in question. For me, the only acceptable criterion of quality is quite simply that "good culture" is that product which the user finds good use for. The essential question is: Cannot we grown-ups cope with the fact that there are areas outside our adult power circle? Are we not safe and secure enough for this? Usually, children's culture is judged by those who do not even know the products themselves but still want to replace them with future-oriented "good alternatives". It is otherwise normal for a subculture to maintain and protect the group's own identity but the so called quality culture for children produced by adults tries to lead children away from their present-day identity. There is a total lack of interest in how children use their cultural products for their own competing purposes. The adults of course mean well: like all powerful elites, they work for a "noble cause". They are just unable to see children's culture from the child's own perspective.

A cultural judgement is most of the time only another attempt to exercise power, often with good intentions: power between generations, between social classes and between the sexes, an attempt to educate, to transfer one's own perspectives, views, values and interests onto others. The essential question is whose perspective you are taking, from what point of view you are looking at the cultural products: if you look at them from your own perspective or from the perspective of those whom the product is aimed at, if you want to CHANGE others or UNDERSTAND them. Does everything have to be education - ALL cultural products? Can't there be one area left outside

education, a free space where children and teenagers are allowed to react, for example, to our upbringing?

If you as an adult see cultural products or cultural experiences from the child's perspective, or as a well educated academic from the perspective of a worker with very little education, or as a woman from a man's perspective, you can gain new insights. If you have the attitude that you are interested in finding out what the cultural products mean to the user, how the user interprets them, you will soon find that people that are different from yourself also understand for example films differently than you do: they see totally different things, they do not notice the things that you concentrate on, they see things in the film that you think are not even there, they "misinterpret" in accordance with their hopes and needs. If you have understood that people interpret and value narratives differently, you will also realize that your own ideas about how for example a certain film "influences" the receiver need not apply to any one but yourself. Different interpretations are likely to result in different "effects".

But because most adults do not have the time to learn more about, even less control, what children actually do, they associate today's childhood with commercialism, TV and ready-made toys. These are regarded as the epitome of "passivity" - not realizing how complicated media narratives are or how active and creative the child's reception, analysis and reworking of TV contents in play actually is. In a word: grown ups can no longer recognize "childhood" - i.e. they cannot recognize their own childhood. Therefore something must have gone wrong: all children are supposed to be free, imaginative and irresponsible - at least after "work" in the day-care centre. "Passivity" in children is the worst thing that adults know of, at the same time as those very same adults can hardly bear how unbelievably active these children usually are.

Children and adults also live in the same worlds

In this respect ideas and ideals about children's culture can be "dangerous", separating adults from children and "children of yesterday" from "children of today" for all the wrong reasons. There is a risk in the traditional way of focusing only on those things that are thought to separate children from adults, not noticing everything we have in common. Seeing children and adults as each other's opposites only leads to nostalgia for one's own lost childhood and to ignorance about children's own cultural choices and situation here and now. Like feminist research, which has to rediscover masculinity, "childist" research must rediscover adults.

As I said earlier, childhood has traditionally meant four inter-woven things: dependence, protection, segregation, irresponsibility. These phenomena are not all of them positive: in all four we can find advantages as well as

disadvantages. "Childhood" has meant balancing between privileges and restrictions: the child has had to give up quite a lot of freedom in order to become "privileged". To be an adult also means privileges as well as restrictions, and these restrictions often give rise to fantasies about "the child within". However, grown-ups only want to acknowledge the "positive" child-like qualities within: vulnerability, curiosity, creativity. The allegedly "negative" qualities such as a longing for protection and care, or dependence and lack of independence are rejected. As grown-ups we do not want to acknowledge the adult segregation from the world of children, our longing for irresponsibility in the disguise of drunkenness, with the help of drugs, exhausting dance or sexual activities. Neither do we want to acknowledge our subservient powerlessness and child status when confronted by responsible bosses of various kinds - resulting in suppressed rebelliousness. If we adults would dare to admit also our own "negative" child-like aspects, we would be able to show a greater understanding also when it comes to children's own preferences as regards cultural products such as films, TV-programmes and comics.

Grown up men have been equally segregated, e.g. at work and leisure, and emotionally dependent on the family, especially on the wife. They have been protected from problems and worries about children and grandparents, quite simply irresponsible and childlike with a bottle in their mouth. For a long time women have been economically dependent on men and segregated to women's salons or the benches around the sand box. Today women increasingly relieve men of their economic responsibility but still want to be protected by men and, together with the children, enter the life boats first. Most women also expect men to do the killing for them and heroically die for the sake of women and children. A weak woman undeniably creates a "strong" man. Many women are also emotionally dependent on their children, some of them even on their husbands, and dependent on men when it comes to practical tasks such as nailing and repairing the car. Day-care centres and schools are regarded as segregated ghettos, but so is The Stock Exchange in Stockholm, the Mine in Kiruna, and many places of work dominated by women, e.g. in hospitals.

Segregation of one category automatically means segregation of other categories. Most men have spent, and are still spending, their day segregated from children, and today the number of women doing the same thing is increasing. We come to the conclusion that children and adults, men and women are more similar than dissimilar. They are only similar in somewhat different areas.

The idea that children and adults are each other's opposites has actually given rise to a backlash during the past few decades. Until the 1960's the Century of the Child was an undeniable fact but since then we can actually talk about the "Decades of the Mother". Between 1880-1960 the child's needs ideally always came first. Children were paid a lot of attention, not only by Dr. Spock and other hand books on child care. A number of different developmental stages were discovered while the problems of parenthood

(then = motherhood) were neglected. Children were protected from everything considered adult and "unsound": naked people were not allowed to appear in films, alcoholic fathers or divorces could not be portrayed in children's books, single parents were a shame and common-law marriages unacceptable. Children's exceptional behaviour was tolerated though: unruly boys were not right away taken to the psychologist but were expected to "grow out of it". The Child was the ideal: innocent, creative, imaginative, playful and full of possibilities. Soon the adults began to want to copy them and to be youngish and downright childish themselves.

However, The Golden Age of Childhood is over now: to devote your life completely to others is no longer feasible. Women demanded a life of their own. Now it is "in" to be "adult", though still of course with the best "child qualities" "within" your adult self. Today, the range of normality is notably smaller for children and nowadays no exceptions to "right" behaviour are allowed, or the child is sent to see the child psychologist. Tolerance for adult "perversions", however, is much greater today: families are not held together anymore "for the sake of the children". Now parents are often adviced to get a divorce, single parents are acceptable, homosexuality is OK and should not even be an obstacle for adoption. There used to be no stages for adulthood, now we have many developmental stages for adults: thirty-something, 40-year-crisis, menopause (for BOTH sexes!), grey panthers, third agers, etc. While Freud regarded the interest to look at genitals as a characteristic of the pre-oedipal child, today's adult society shows an increased interest in watching pornography, which the adults at the same time try to protect their children from... The tables are indeed turned! (I am indebted to David Elkind's talk in Finland a couple of years ago for some of these ideas.)

However, this backlash has also brought something good with it since fathers have increasingly entered their children's lives, which makes for a new beginning when it comes to relations between children and adults. Fortunately men are more playful with their children, more child-like, less forbidding and more equal. This might counter the negative effects brought about by the view of children and adults as opposites, leading to artificial acceleration of children's intellectual development, to denial or suppression of the allegedly negative child-like qualities in adults, such as day dreams and quiet, imaginal dialogues with others "inside you", and fantasies about revenge and escape. We often hear slogans about "Childhood Preservation". The question is however, instead of just "preserving childhood", which parts are actually **worth** preserving and strengthening - and which ones should rather be combatted in children as well as in adults. It cannot be recommended to perpetuate qualities like subordination, obedience, powerlessness, irresponsibility, supervision or control. For the most part, childhood still means powerlessness and irresponsibility and in **that** respect children would welcome the disappearance of childhood. Hand in hand with powerlessness goes a tendency to put the blame on others. On the other hand, dependence on others can in some cases be something positive.

Another disadvantage, as a consequence of separating childhood from adulthood, is the discouraging effect that psychoanalysis has on us, insisting that all our present problems are due to our difficulties in childhood - NOT to the fact that we are having problems NOW at work e. g. and need to change our present situation. Perhaps we, although adults, feel that we are simply treated like children? It is time not only to demand more respect on the part of adults for children's own choices and preferences but also better adult recognition of their own positive as well as negative child-like qualities and positions.

Above all, we must stop seeing children and adults as each other's opposites, as beginning and end, down and up. How can we be sure that we grow up and not down? Why not like a roller-coaster? Opposites have only two directions, either-or: child or adult, man or woman, good or bad. The ways of thinking and social control that we are exposed to as children, unfortunately also characterize our adult experiences. "Child-and-parent" is the model for most of our complementary, unequal social relations. Here I am thinking of relations like husband-wife, teacher-pupil, employer-employee, person living in the capital-person living way up north, doctor-patient, researcher- object of research. There is constant interaction between controller and controlled, up and down. Even as adults we waver between different types of child and parent roles. One part of a parent's role is to be rational, respectable, serious, responsible, not to be loud, noisy or fond of amusement. In more intimate relations with men, women often use the special kind of control that we can call the parent model and men are either obedient children or child rebels. Women sometimes see men as little boys, whom they have to keep an eye on: Boys will be boys... Women e g take a tolerant parent role towards men's drinking, because alcohol reminds us of children's play, of joking and resistant mass culture. To go to the pub is like going out to play. Now the wife-mother reacts with weaker control and the half drunk adult manchild is allowed to break many rules, compared to when sober. Today we see obedient children almost solely amongst adults, especially in places of work. Adults become obedient, ingratiating, hypocritical children in their relations to their "parents", their bosses and superiors. They sell their independence for comfortable security and a pat on the shoulder.

Instead of focusing on the supposedly opposite child-adult and child-parent roles, we women that dominate the child-care and educational professions should, in my opinion, emphasize more the relation we can call "SIBLING-HOOD" (a word that hardly exists) or SISTERHOOD. We are all sisters in that we sometimes wish both to be taken care of by parents and be irresponsible, at the same time as we compete and want to exercise power over brothers and sisters as well as parents. We want both to be small and to seem adult. For adults these "parents" can consist of other adults or of social safety nets. We remain sisters throughout our lives even though we change from children into adults. But siblinghood or sisterhood resembles more a seesaw that swings up and down, than a ladder that you have to climb, racing after those inevitably ahead of you. Sisters can develop at

different speeds, they are constantly transformed side by side, one of them can grow taller than the other, though the other can later catch up with the first one, and so on. Sisters are constantly changing in a more parallel way. Their perspectives are much more alike. Instead of becoming little mothers, girls should be allowed to really be sisters... Sometimes big sisters, sometimes little sisters. This change, of course, would be easier with an equally shared parenthood .

If we, in the future, were to look at each other more as sisters - regardless of differences in age and sex - this would automatically have a positive effect on children's culture also. We would get less "fatherly" and more sisterly types of heroes in children's play, on TV, in films and books - as well as in the work places of adults. We would, like Mark Gerzon suggests (1984) give up old - male-defined - public heroes like the Pioneer and the Soldier, who both are based on a man's denial of dependence and fear. We would exchange private heroes like the Male Family Provider and the Female Home Expert for more equal and bisexual heroes. Instead of the Pioneer, who alone conquers the land and tames the forest, we would have the Healer, who dedicates his life to healing the wounds that the Pioneer has caused the earth. Instead of the Soldier, who protects women and children by misusing his own body in order to defend them, we would have the Mediator, who is able to hear opposite voices and views and understand "the enemy" because he/she understands himself/herself from the inside, rather than projects all evil onto others - something that especially women today often have a tendency to do. Instead of the Family Provider and the Self-sacrificing Mother, we would have the Friend who shares work, family and spare time. Instead of the Expert (on care, economy, politics or whatever), we would have the Colleague - at home as well as at work.

If we were to acknowledge both the positive and the negative child-like qualities in ourselves AS ADULTS, we would realise that WE are also here and now, not somewhere in the past (like psychoanalysis claims) or in the future (immortalised by our children). Then we could stop longing for our own childhood and REALLY SEE THE CHILDREN around us - instead of turning our eyes inwards, towards some imagined space inside us. My answer to the question "Back to the Future or Forward to the Past?" is then: Let us all live in the here and NOW!

Therefore: let the next century be the "century of the sibling" - "The century of brothers and sisters", regardless of age!

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